

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8721

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, VE
SUBJECT: AD PARTY CONVENTION-BETANCOURT'S PROTEGE, LUIS PINERUA
ORDAZ OFFICIALLY PROCLAIMED AS AD PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

REF: CARACAS 8517

SUMMARY. IN THREE-DAY AD PARTY CONVENTION, AD SECRETARY GENERAL LUIS PINERUA ORDAZ WAS OFFICIALLY PROCLAIMED THE AD PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AUGUST 27. PINERUA, IN A SOLID, IF LESS THAN EARTH-SHAKING PRESENTATION, PRAISED THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION, AND THEN HIGHLIGHTED NEEDS FOR END TO PUBLIC CORRUPTION, IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES, AND THE BATTLE AGAINST INFLATION. PINERUA'S SPEECH SUFFERED BY CONTRAST WITH AD FOUNDING FATHER ROMULO BETANCOURT'S INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW CANDIDATE. IN VINTAGE FORM, FORMER PRESIDENT BETANCOURT AROUSED THE CONVENTION WITH PRAISE FOR HIS PROTEGE, POLITICAL JOKES AND UNDERCUT COPEI WITH A RINGING CALL FOR THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY TO JOIN RANKS WITH AD IN ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL GRAND JURY TO INVESTIGATE ADMINISTRATIVE CORRUPTION. THE CONVENTION ALSO FILLED PARTY POSTS WITH THE ANTICIPATED CANDIDATES. END SUMMARY.

1. VINTAGE BETANCOURT. THE GRAND OLD MAN OF AD AND OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY, ROMULO BETANCOURT INTRODUCED PINERUA
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DURING AN HOUR LONG LAUDATORY TRIBUTE. REVIEWING PINERUA'S CAREER IN AD, DON ROMULO PRAISED HIM AS A LEADER IN HIS OWN RIGHT, AND STRUCK BACK AT THOSE CRITICS OF PINERUA'S LIMITED EDUCATION BY NOTING THAT NEITHER BOLIVAR, PEREZ, PINERUA NOR HE (BETANCOURT) HAD A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, BUT HAD LEARNED THEIR WAY IN THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS. RANGING OVER DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY, BETANCOURT EMPHASIZED HIS

FAVORITE THEMES OF DEMOCRACY AND CLEAN GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO CHALLENGED COPEI ON SEVERAL FRONTS: THAT COPEI JOIN AD IN ESTABLISHING A GRAND JURY TO EXAMINE ALL CHARGES OF ADMINISTRATIVE CORRUPTION OF SENIOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS SINCE THE 1958 FOUNDING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM; AND TO SUPPORT PASSAGE IN THE CONGRESS OF LAWS TO SAFEGUARD THE PUBLIC PATRIMONY, FOR THE COORDINATION OF POLICE SERVICES, REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL LAW, OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN.

2. STANDARD PINERUA. IN HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, THE NEW CANDIDATE EMPHASIZED ADMINISTRATIVE MORALITY, THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES AS THE MAJOR THEMES OF HIS FUTURE ADMINISTRATION. HE REMINDED THE AD STALWARTS THAT AD IS A PEOPLE'S PARTY AND THAT CONSEQUENTLY THE CENTRAL OBJECTIVE OF HIS GOVERNMENT WILL BE "TO PROCURE AND OFFER IN ABUNDANCE ITEMS OF PRIMARY NECESSITY THAT THE CONSUMER DEMANDS." HE INDICATED HE FAVORS MORE PUBLICLY FINANCED LOW-COST HOUSING, SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, AND REFORM OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. IN FOREIGN POLICY, HE PAID HOMAGE TO OPEC, MENTIONED VENEZUELA'S CONTINUING ROLE AS A LEADER IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND STRESSED VENEZUELA'S TIES WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, MENTIONING THE UNITED STATES AND VENEZUELA'S LATIN BRETHREN BY NAME.

3. PARTY POSTS. ON THE LAST DAY OF THE CONVENTION, AS
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ANTICIPATED (CARACAS 8512) CTV PRESIDENT JOSE VARGAS WAS ELECTED TO THE VACANT POSITION OF FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, ALEJANDRO IZAGUIREE RAN UNOPPOSED FOR THE POSITION PINERUA VACATED AS SECRETARY GENERAL, AND DEPUTY LUIS ALFARO UCERO HANDILY WON THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF ORGANIZATION (IZAGUIRRE'S OLD JOB), IN THE ONLY DISPUTED CONTEST WITH CEN MEMBER ARTURO HERNANDEZ GRISANTI.

4. COMMENT: THE CONVENTION MET ITS CENTRAL GOAL OF ACHIEVING PARTY UNITY IN PUBLIC. PRESIDENT PEREZ AND DEFEATED AD PRIMARY CANDIDATE LUSINCHI WERE ON HAND TO PRAISE THE NEW CANDIDATE. THE CONVENTION POINTED UP SEVERAL INTERESTING FACETS OF THE PRESENT STATE OF "ACCION DEMOCRATICA": FIRST, THE PARTY REMAINS THE CREATURE OF ITS FOUNDER AND MAXIMUM LEADER, ROMULO BETANCOURT. BETANCOURT'S INTRODUCTION OF PINERUA WAS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE CONVENTION, AND FEATURED THE OLD MAN AT HIS BEST. ALTERNATIVELY JOKING, AND THEN SERIOUS AS HE PREACHED THE VIRTUES OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY, BETANCOURT WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO STRESS THAT PINERUA HAS THE STATURE AND EXPERIENCE TO BE PRESIDENT ON HIS OWN. HE NEATLY UNDERCUT AN IMPORTANT CAMPAIGN THEME OF COPEI BY CHALLENGING THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS TO, IN ESSENCE, PUT UP OR

SHUT UP WITH HIS CALL FOR A BIPARTISAN GRAND JURY, AMONG OTHER STEPS, TO INVESTIGATE PUBLIC CORRUPTION. SECOND, LUIS PINERUA WAS PORTRAYED AS A COMPETENT, SOLID, AND SERIOUS POLITICIAN DEVOTED TO IMPROVING THE WELFARE OF THE MASSES ON A RATHER "POPULIST" PLATFORM (AT LEAST IN U.S. POLITICAL TERMS). THIRD, PINERUA COULDHAVE SOME DIFFICULTY IN CONVINCING SOME VOTERS THAT HE OFFERS SOMETHING NEW, SINCE HE IS THE CANDIDATE OF THE INCUMBENT PARTY (ALBEIT IF NOT THE CHOICE OF THE INCUMBENT PRESIDENT). FOURTH, PINERUA'S TELEVISION IMAGE LACKS CHARISMA, AND HIS SPEECH WHICH HE READ, CONTAINED LITTLE ELOQUENCE AND NO HUMOR. THIS COULDHAVE BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE RESULTS, SINCE HE PROJECTS THE IMAGE OF A DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL WITH DEEP ROOTS AMONG THE PEOPLE WHO IS COMMITTED TO ACTION RATHER
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THAN RHETORIC. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT COULD ALSO AUGUR ILL FOR AD. BOTH MAJOR PARTIES BELIEVE TELEVISION WILL BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER IN ELECTING THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA.
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